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ABSTRACT

The speech of five native English-speakers and five native Japanese-speaking learners of English as a Second Language was analyzed for use of "will" and "going to" in certain contexts. Subjects were asked to tell their summer plans and to express their expectations of changes in Japan and the United States in the next few years. Results indicate that in discussing immediate plans, both native speakers (NS) and non-native speakers (NNS) prefer "will" over "going to," with NS using the "I'll" contraction at times and the NNS not using it at all. No instances of negative forms of the two expressions were found. In making predictions, NS used "going to" far more than "will," while NNS used "will" infrequently and "going to" not at all. Evidence supporting the plausibility of a future action and its relationship to the choice of form used was also examined in both contexts. It is concluded that two claims made previously about the choice to use "will" and "going to" are either inconclusive or unsubstantiated by this study. Areas for future research are outlined. A brief bibliography is included. The conversations are provided in four appendixes. (MSE)

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A Study of Will and Going To in Plans and Predictions.

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INTRODUCTION

The distinction between the use of will and going to is a complicated issue with multiple and sometimes contradictory explanations given by experts. For this reason, the difference between the use of will and going to can be problematic for classroom teachers and text writers. This is a cross sectional, naturalistic study because in looking at the literature it is not possible to provide theory. It examines a group of five native speakers (NS) and a group of five learners (NNS) discussing immediate plans and long range predictions. Three research questions are addressed. The first research question is, which forms, will or going to, are used by NS and NNS speakers for discussing immediate plans and which forms are used for making predictions? It is strongly suggested (Aitken 1990: 70, Martin 1978: 186, Lewis 1986: 81, Thomson and Martinet 1986: 186) that if there is evidence, the going to form is used. Therefore, the second research question is, does the presence of evidence result in the going to form? It is strongly suggested (Aitken 1990: 70, Lewis 1986: 117, Martin 1978: 186, Sheen 1991: 5) that if the decision is made at the moment of speaking, the will form is used. Therefore, the third research question is, if the decision is made at the time of speaking, is the will form used?

In discussing the relationship of evidence, Martin (1978:186) states that the going to future works when the speaker has objective evidence. In the sentence, "Look at those clouds, it's going to rain." the evidence is the clouds. Thomson and Martinet (1986: 185) seem to agree that evidence is important when they say that if preparations have been made, then the going to form is used. Aitken (1990: 70), however, says the structure depends on the kind of evidence. If the evidence is concrete, going to is used but if the evidence is rational or mental, then will is used. Her example of the second kind of evidence is the sentence, "I will be sick (if I eat any more)". Lewis (1986: 81) says in cases where the speaker is looking forward to something, the going to form is used and both external and internal evidence is admissible. In discussing the relationship of time, Sheen (1991:5) says that time is crucial. If the intention is decided at the moment of speaking, use will. If the intention is decided before hand, use going to. Aitken

(1990:5) agrees with Sheen that the time one makes the plan is crucial, but goes on to add that the degree of certainty is also important. Thomson and Martinet (1986: 187) seem to agree that will is used to indicate the intention at the moment of decision, but also add that will expresses stronger determination whereas going to is used for intention and prediction, but that very often either form can be used. Celce-Murcia and Larson-Freeman (1983:67) continue this line of thought and maintain that will is the true form of the future and give examples that suggest that will and going to could be interchangeable. Haegeman (1989:309) clearly states that no hard and fast rule is possible or even desirable because at the sentence level there is no clear distinction between the meaning of will and going to. Martin (1978:186) disagrees and maintains that there are, in fact, several determining factors in the selection of will over going to: volition, prior knowledge, sudden resolve, performativity and context. Clearly there is no consensus on these issues.

METHOD

Subjects

Baseline data subjects were five female North American English native speakers ranging in age from early 20's to middle 40's. Are all residents of the U.S. originally from central or northeast Ohio. All were volunteers and no special selection criteria, other than gender, was used. The subjects were interviewed February 1992. The non native speaker subjects were five second year, female Japanese students at Seigakuin Junior College ranging in age from 19 to 21. All were from the Tokyo metropolitan area. All were volunteers and no special selection criteria, other than gender, was used. The subjects were interviewed April 1992.

Procedures

Both groups were given two tasks which it was hoped would predispose speakers toward either will or going to. Task one was aimed at plans and task two at predictions. Both task questions were framed so as to avoid using either will or going to. The first task question was, What are your summer plans? and the second task question was, Changes are likely to take place in Japan—US in next ten years. What changes do you expect to see? Both groups were recorded and transcribed (see Appendices 1- 4).

RESULTS

The results summary (Table 1) indicate that in discussing immediate plans both NS and NNS prefer will over going to by a two to one margin. The only difference between the NS and the NNS groups is that the NS group tend to use the I'll contraction (five out of eight times) whereas the NNS group never used the I'll form. In making predictions the NS group showed a preference for going to and again showed a tendency toward the I'll form (two out of four times). The NNS group used only the will form but in fact used neither form very often. Both the NS and the NNS groups used forms other than will and going to in both plans and predictions e.g. may, it might be fun to, I'd like to take and I plan to. When discussing immediate plans, the NS group used the first person, singular pronoun ten out of twelve times while the NNS groups used it seven out of twelve times. The most typical way for the NS in this study to express short term plans was, "I'll (probably) + be verb." This verifies Thomson and Martinet (1986:185) ". . . will + infinitive in affirmative is used almost entirely for the first person". Finally, it should be noted that there were no instances of the negative forms of either will (won't) or going to (not going to). Negation was expressed in ways such as, "I don't have any special plans" (Appendix 1, speaker A, line 48) or "I have nothing planned. . ." (Appendix A, speaker B, line 52).

TABLE 1
Results Summary

	immediate plans			predictions		
	going to	will	totals	going to	will	totals
NS	4	8	12	14	4	18
NNS	4	8	12	0	2	2

Evidence can be defined as a present factor that relates to and suggests the plausibility of a future action. As previously mentioned, dark clouds in the sky can be seen as objective or external evidence of rain and a feeling that if one continues to eat, sickness will ensue can be

interpreted as subjective or internal evidence. In this study the criterion for deciding the presence of evidence is the presence of a marker that indicates a plausible reason or evidence of intention for the action. An example of evidence is speaker S saying that she is going to be getting married and three lines later mentioning the name of her fiancee (Appendix A, lines 1 and 4). See Appendix E for a complete listing of evidence markers. When evidence is present in immediate plans (Table 2), the NS group show 1 instance of going to and 8 instances of will. The NNS follows the same pattern. This would seem to suggest that the answer to research question 2, namely, that in the utterances produced by both NS and NNS, did the presence of evidence result in the going to form?, is no. When evidence is present in predictions, however, the NS group reversed themselves (Table 3). Out of 9 instances of evidence, they used going to 6 times and will 3 times. This limited study seems to suggest that the answer to research question two is yes for predictions and no for plans.

TABLE 2

Summary of Evidence in Immediate Plans

	immediate plans						
	no evidence	going to	will	evidence	going to	will	totals
NS	3	3	0	9	1	8	12
NNS	8	4	4	4	1	3	12

TABLE 3

Summary of Evidence in Predictions

	predictions						
	no evidence	going to	will	evidence	going to	will	totals
NS	9	8	1	9	6	3	18
NNS	1	0	1	1	0	1	2

In this study the criterion for deciding if the decision was made at the time of speaking is the presence of a marker that indicates spontaneity. Examples of markers include, it just depends on, probably, I think, I don't care. See Appendix F for a complete listing. When markers indicating spontaneous decision are present in immediate plans (Table 4) the NS show 10 instances with 3 uses of going to and 7 uses of will and the NNS show only 1 instance using the will form. When markers indicating spontaneous decision are present in predictions (Table 5) the NS show 15 instances with 12 uses of going to and 3 uses of will and the NNS show no marked utterances. This seems to indicate that the answer to research question three is yes for plans and no for predictions.

TABLE 4

Summary of spontaneous decision markers in immediate plans

	immediate plans						
	no marker	going to	will	marker	going to	will	totals
NS	2	1	1	10	3	7	12
NNS	11	4	7	1	—	1	12

TABLE 5

Summary of spontaneous decision markers in predictions

	predictions						
	no marker	going to	will	marker	going to	will	totals
NS	3	2	1	15	12	3	18
NNS	2	–	2	–	–	–	2

DISCUSSION

This study shows that generally NS prefer will when discussing fairly immediate plans and going to when making fairly long range predictions. If evidence is considered, NS still prefer will when discussing plans and going to when making predictions. If the decision appears to have been made at the moment of speaking NS still prefer will when discussing plans and going to when making predictions. This pattern, which can be clearly seen in Table 6, seems to indicate that the deciding factors is whether the utterance is a plan or a prediction rather than the presence of evidence or the time of the decision.

TABLE 6

NS Preference Summary

NS	plans	predictions
generally	will	going to
evidence	will	going to
spontaneous decision	will	going to

With the NNS there is a definite preference for the will form (Table 7) to the extent that we can say that NNS overuse will. Is this because learners acquire the will form first or because it

was taught early in their career and seems to them to be the true form of the future? It is not possible for the results of this study to make a conclusive statement.

TABLE 7
NNS Preference Summary

NNS	plans	predictions
generally	will	will
evidence	will	will
spontaneous decision	will	—

CONCLUSION

Two strong claims concerning the use of will and going to were examined and were found to be inconclusive or unsubstantiated. Several factors should be taken into consideration before reaching conclusions based on this limited and, admittedly small study. One is that the results of this study may be flawed by an unclear definitions e.g. what constitutes evidence. For example, in Appendix C, line 24, Su says, "I will work next year so I will visit company." Both of these instances of will were counted as having evidence because second year students in a junior college have knowledge they will graduate. As any teacher who has taught second year junior college students knows, finding a job for the following year is their top priority. Does this concern constitute evidence in the same sense that clouds give evidence of coming rain? Perhaps this study should be taken as a pointer toward future research rather than disproof of generally held usage rules. Another factor might be that speakers have personal styles or preferred modes of speaking and that my small speaker sample is skewed. For example NS speaker S says going to 12 times to only 2 times for will. NS speaker B , on the other hand, never once used either term preferring terms such as "I plan to." NS speakers J and A prefer the will form (J 4 to 1 and A 4 to 0) (Appendix 1 and 2). It is interesting to speculate on the relation of personality to speaker style. Finally, it remains a possibility that writers of pedagogical grammar books have tended to rely more on common knowledge than empirical studies, which

may indicate that some commonly accepted rules may not, in fact, be completely true. This is an area that could benefit from more classroom research.

FUTURE ISSUES

1. Groups larger than five or six make recording difficult. Could larger samples be accomplished by other means e.g. a questionnaire?
2. Current textbooks could be examined to see which future forms are being taught and in which units of the text they are being taught.
3. What forms of the future, including will and going to, should be taught and when should they appear in a syllabus?
4. What would be pedagogically appropriate ways to teach future forms?
5. Is there such a thing as speaker style and does speaker personality plays a strong role in determining which forms of the future are used?
6. This study examined women only. Would a group of men only or a mixed gender group produce similar results?
7. Would other national forms of English (British, Canadian, Australian, etc) produce similar results?
8. Would the results be the same if extended discourse in the form of an interview were examined?

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Appendix A

NS Task 1 What are your summer plans?

1S My summer plans? I am going to be getting married, moving into a new home and
2 probably taking a couple of vacations by myself. (Laughs.)
3 A OK, Where would you like to go?
4 S Anywhere. I don't care. Probably to Europe. Tom and I may go to Europe
5 or we may end up in South America since we've started flying into South American
6 cities. It just depends on wherever it's going to be safe. I'll probably take, uh, my new
7 step daughter to be with us, since I have a vacation in July.
8 A That's not alone.
9 S That depends on, if I like her after the first month. No, if she doesn't drive me crazy then,
10 yeah, I'll take her with me.
11 J I think she meant alone, without her husband.
12 S Oh, yeah.
13 X unintelligible
14 B But never alone, for a trip, that's. . .
15 S Not just by myself
16 B No, no. uh uh.
17 A I've done that before.
18 S I know, but that's (laughs) but you're the only one I know.
19 A Oh, OK.
20 J But you know, it might be fun to take a trip by yourself, sometimes. I have a girlfriend who
21 just wrote a song about it.
22 A If you could do whatever you want.
23 X unintelligible
24 A At work you always have to worry about what everybody else wants and meet with a lot
25 of deadlines.
26 J Where have you gone by yourself?

27 A I came out to California.
28 J Uh huh
29 X unintelligible
30 G Well, pretty much, right now, my summer plans are up in the air. I'm either going to start
31 school again and start my master's or else, um, if my Dad gets a job somewhere and if I
32 follow my parents to Saudi Arabia or, oh definitely Ohio, that's right, that's a definite thing
33 for the 4th of July, cannot miss the last Jones' party because that's my, well, actually last
34 year was my last one, but they're pretty much up in the air, my plans. I'm just gonna, ah,
35 take, I like to follow ... I don't know. Joan.
36 J Yes, I will be going to Ohio for my 20th year class reunion and, uh, seeing all my old
37 friends. I think I'll rent a limousine so that we don't have to have a designated driver.
38 And that should be a lot of fun. And I may continue taking prerequisites for graduate
39 school starting in the summer session again, at least perhaps statistics, if I can bear it. It
40 is tough. And, um, I will probably go spend some time in South Carolina, my folks have
41 some condos down there on the beach. And I'll probably do that, for part of the time.
42 And, uh . . .
43 G With Neil and the boys?
44 J Neil and the boys and probably my sister and hopefully both my parents
45 A Oh, that'll be fun then.
46 J Yeah, that should be it. Sometimes some old college friends of mine come and join us
47 with their, we all get our own apartments and it's great. It's a great place to visit.
48 A I don't have any special plans as far as traveling. I'd like to take another trip this year,
49 besides the one coming up here, uh, but as far as during the summer itself I'll probably
50 do the traditional things which is, for me, it's playing volleyball and golfing. I look forward
51 to that.
52 B I have nothing planned for the summer. It seems too far away. But, I plan to go to Florida
53 in March and that's kind of it but other than that after just having this wedding I have no
54 plans for us.

Appendix B

NS Task 2 What Changes Do you Expect to See in the U.S. in the Next Ten Years? (excerpted transcriptions)

J . . . so I think particularly in California, which is where I live, we may not see those high prices that we've seen continuing onward in our housing market.

J . . . I think it might kind of level off and even continue to decline as far as, and, um, I don't know.

J . . . I think maybe the rich might continue to get richer and people without money might continue to have a difficult time.

A Do you think the emphasis will stay on material things?

G Well, I can say, my personal opinion of California is the educational system is still, going to keep declining.

G At least California is just going to be more a welfare state because people want something for nothing there.

G There'll be less children born of affluent families because they understand how much it costs to have someone raised comfortably therefore they're not going to cut down by having more kids and having to spread it all out.

G I don't know. I think there'll be just less children being born just because of day care and the quality of education they are getting.

S I think it can happen somewhere down the road, but not in the, we have too many women, at this point in time, that are still stabbing each other in the back, and until they can develop a good old boy network, which so many of our men have, it's not going to happen.

A So you think the women are the ones who will keep, ah.

S A woman is going to keep another woman from being president.

G I don't think any, in the woman, are going to change.

G And I think divorce rates are going to go down. I think people now are getting married and they are going to try to make it work cause some of the people are

from divorced families and they know what they can turn into.

G And I think they are really going to try to stick it out and there's going to be less divorces.

S And I think also too, people aren't going to be getting divorces, a lot of people are afraid about AIDS.

J I think, this is just my own personal idea, but people may start having children a little bit younger again because they may look at the generation before them and say, "Gee, those women were in their 30's and stuff and there were an awful lot of problems that went on".

S . . . and I think that eventually it's going to come to more that, um, I think that both parents are going to take a more of an active role in raising the children and there's not going to be a stereotype of this or a stereotype of that.

S I think the father's going to have more of an active role and I think that's, the family, I think is going to become more important in the next ten years.

S . . . yeah, but I think as far as a whole I think that, ah, that families are going to become more important again, I think that our government basically is still going to be the same

J What about the ozone layer? What do you guys think is going to happen to the ozone layer in the next ten years?

J We may all have to wear hats.

Appendix C

NNS Task 1 What are your summer plans?

C I'm Chiharu. I'm going to Australia with my friend in summer.

T How long?

C About two, ah, weeks.

Su Where will you go?

C Where? Sydney.

Sa How long will you stay?

C In there? How long are you staying there? (pause) Fourteen days.

8 T Do you have a plan?

9 C Uh, I have no plan. Um. Skiing and cooking and I play with Kangaroo and

10 Koala.

11 T I'm going to go Hokkaido.

12 C How long stay there?

13 T Maybe ten days. (pause) Or two weeks.

14 K Do you have a plan?

15 T Not yet.

16 Su Please, please give me a souvenir. (all laugh)

17 T No, I can't

18 K I will work part time in Tokyo Disney Land this summer.

19 T What you gonna do in there?

20 K Balloon vender. (all laugh)

21 T Do you like it?

22 K Yes.

23 C Pleased give me balloon when I went there.

24 Su I doesn't, nani, ah, I have no plan, but I will work next year so I will visit

25 company and I want, I want research, look for my job.

26 T What kind of job do you want?

27 Su I, maybe I, will be office lady.

28 Sa I will going to Hawaii with my friend this summer.

29 Su What will you do in Hawaii?

30 Sa I will go, ah, swimming and shopping.

31 T Are you, are you going to drive in Hawaii.

32 Sa I can't driving a car. I have a driving license in Japan but international license. . .

33 T She doesn't have.

Appendix D

NNS Task 2 What Changes Do you Expect to See in Japan in the Next Ten Years?

1 C I'm Chiharu. I will married after ten years so I want to go to the moon. Honeymoon.
2 (laughter) And, uh, I want to be everything more cheap. I expect to be, I expect
3 everything is more cheap. I, ah, we live in peace. I don't want to war.
4. T Ten years later there is too many people so I think so, we live in, under the water. That's
5 all.
6 Su Maybe ten years later (pause) I expect we have special pill kusuri for aids. A lot of people
7 save life. Maybe cancer also. But too many people in earth.
8 We have too many people so bio technology eto is more, that's all.
9 Sa Ten years later I live in the Mars because earth is over. I will married with Mars man.
10 (much laughter). That's all.
11 Su Do you want to have a child?
12 Sa My child have three legs
13 K Ten years later we make friends with ET and everyone can fly and everyone
can speak many languages.

Appendix E

Evidence Markers

Evidence in NS immediate plans (see Appendix A)

Spk	line	evidence			form
S	1		yes	she mentions the name of her fiance	going to
S	6	no			going to
S	6		yes	depends	I'll
S	10		yes	vacation in July (line 7) and crazy (line 9)	I'll
G	30	no			going to
G	34	no			going to
J	36		yes	20th class reunion	will

J	37		yes	reference to designated driver	will
J	40		yes	parent's condo	will
J	41		yes	parents' condo	I'll
A	45		yes	reference to parents in the previous sentence	will
A	49		yes	"traditional" implies evidence of past habits	I'll
Totals	12	3	9		

Evidence in NS predictions (see Appendix B)

Spk	line	evidence			form
G	9	no			going to
G	10		yes	people want something for nothing	going to
G	12		yes	cost	there'll
G	15		yes	day care	there'll
G	23		yes	previous line	going to
J	43	no			going to
A	7	no		(question)	will
A	21		yes	previous lines referenced by "so you think"	will
S	20		yes	old boy network	going to
S	22		yes	same as for line 20	going to
S	29		yes	the word "also"	going to
S	35		yes	"more than that"	going to
S	36	no		speaker's opinion	going to
S	37	no		speaker's opinion	going to
S	38	no		speaker's opinion	going to
S	39	no		speaker's opinion	going to
S	40	no		speaker's opinion	going to
S	42	no		speaker's opinion	going to
Totals	18	9	9		

Evidence in NNS immediate plans (see Appendix C)

Spk	line			evidence	form
C	1		yes	my friend	going to
Su	4	no		(question)	will
Sa	6	no		(question)	will
T	11	no			going to
K	18		yes	mentions place name: Tokyo Disney Land	will
T	19	no		(question)	going to
Su	24		yes	evidence is implied: she is a second year student which is evidence of a need for a job next year	will
Su	24		yes	same as line 24 above	will
Su	27	no			will
Su	29	no		(question)	will
Sa	30	no			will
T	31	no			going to
Totals	12	8	4		

Evidence in NNS predictions (see Appendix D)

Spk	line			evidence	form
C	1	no			will
Sa	10		yes	living on Mars	will
Totals	2	1	1		

Appendix F

Presence of Markers Indicating Decision Made at Moment of Speaking

Markers in NS immediate plans (see Appendix A)

Spk	line	marker	form
S	6	anywhere, I don't care, it just depends on	going to
S	6	probably	I'll
S	10	that depends on, no, if. . .yeah	I'll

G	30	well (line 30) um (line 31)	going to
G	34	just, ah, I don't know	going to
J	37	I think	I'll
J	40	um	will
J	41	probably	I'll
A	45	oh (a reference to new information on line 44)	that'll
A	49	ah	I'll
Totals	10	7 instances of will and 3 instances of going to	

Markers in NS predictions (see Appendix B)

A	7	a question, unlikely to have been planned	will
G	9	well, my personal opinion	going to
G	15	I don't know, I think	there'll
G	21	a question, unlikely to have been planned	will
S	22	(she is completing the statement by A in line 21)	going to
G	23	I don't think	going to
G	24	and I think	going to
G	25	and I think	going to
G	27	and I think, really	going to
S	36	um (line 35)	going to
S	38	I think	going to
S	39	I think	going to
S	40	yeah, but I think, ah,	going to
S	41	I think	going to
J	42	what about, what do you guys think	going to
Totals	15	3 instances of will and 12 instances of going to	

Markers in NNS immediate plans (see Appendix C)

Sa	6	a question, unlikely to have been planned	will
Totals	1	no instances of going to and 1 instance of will	

Note: appendix 4 (NNS predictions) contained no markers.